

West Lindsey Housing Strategy 2018 - 2022



FOREWORD



As Chair of the West Lindsey Prosperous Communities Committee, one of responsibilities I have is to ensure that the policies which the committee approves are in line with the West Lindsey Corporate Plan and meet the needs of the community. Particular strands of focus are 'People First', 'Open for Business' and 'Value for Money'. At the same time we need to be innovative and flexible in our approach to ensure the best outcomes for all. With this in mind I am delighted to introduce the authority's Housing Strategy for the next five years.

Those who live here know that West Lindsey is a great place to live and work as well as a wonderful place in which to invest. Our aim is for it to be a place where all residents are able to contribute to, and benefit from, sustainable prosperity. We recognise that housing is key to the success of our

communities as well as being of paramount importance to the quality of life, health and wellbeing of residents. With a growing and ageing population we must plan for and meet the housing needs of all within the district and ensure that the positive impacts of doing so are realized through education, health and wellbeing, together with finance and the building of stronger communities. These in turn support our wider strategic ambitions for growth, jobs and training opportunities which make West Lindsey a great place to live.

The West Lindsey Housing Strategy identifies the key challenges for housing over the next five years and sets out what the council and its partners are planning to do to resolve them and take West Lindsey forward by identifying opportunities and setting out how they can be realized. The decisions will not always be simple and easily achieved but it is important that we seek ways in improving our Housing offering and this proposed strategy allows us to do so. It encourages not only flexibility but also reflects a dynamic approach to the constantly changing needs of the community allowing us to react positively to opportunities which arise.

Achieving our vision will not be easy in these times of constant change but it is important that we are ambitious and innovative in our work, that we keep our Corporate Plan at the forefront of our efforts, and look forward to engaging with the community and working with partners to continue to improve housing services and to deliver more homes in the district.

Councillor Shelia Bibb

INTRODUCTION

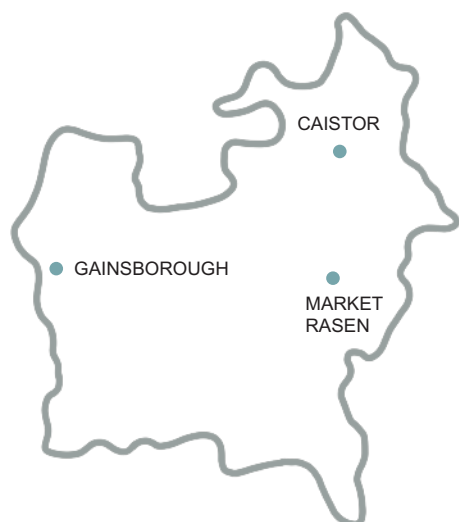
Access to good quality housing is the foundation upon which people can build happy and successful lives. This Housing Strategy provides an overarching plan to guide the council and its partners in tackling the major housing challenges facing the district. It aims to promote three key themes which affect housing and identifies the outcomes that the council wishes to achieve, through the implementation plan.

We are clear that our role as an enabling authority is a critical one if we are to realise our ambition to increase housing supply, meet housing need and aspiration and transform our neighbourhoods and that to do so we will need to work with a range of partners across all tenures, balancing the needs and aspirations of all within legislation and policy.

This Strategy therefore aims to provide clear strategic vision and leadership in an increasingly uncertain national economic and policy climate. It has been developed with full knowledge of the significant challenges ahead and allows for an early review to meet the requirements of legislative changes. The strategy contributes towards the council's corporate priorities for West Lindsey and is intrinsically linked to a number of other plans and strategies, not only of the council, but also those of other key partners and stakeholders. At a time when the authority's capacity to deliver services is reducing the importance of maximising the potential to shape the work of partners, and work collaboratively, to deliver not only the built environment but existing housing and housing related services, is at the heart of the West Lindsey Housing Strategy 2018 – 2022.

WEST LINDSEY WHO WE ARE

West Lindsey is the largest and one of the most rural districts within the County of Lincolnshire. It includes villages to the north of the City of Lincoln, and covers an area of approximately 1,156 square kilometres (446 square miles). The administrative centre of the district (and largest town) is Gainsborough, with the district also being home to the market towns of Caistor and Market Rasen.



- West Lindsey is home to some 98,812¹ residents and around 42,350² dwellings.
- West Lindsey has witnessed steady population growth since 2001 and over the next eighteen years (to 2036) the population in West Lindsey is forecast to grow by a further 11,500 residents (or 6,500 households)³.
- Situated in the north west of the county West Lindsey is bordered by East Lindsey, City of Lincoln, North Kesteven, Newark and Sherwood, Bassetlaw, North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire Councils
- The district is rural in nature transacted by a number of 'A' roads.
- The proportion of ethnic minority residents in West Lindsey was approximately 3.5% as of 2011. Amongst ethnic minorities, those classified as Other White, White Irish and Indian comprise the largest groups⁴.
- West Lindsey currently has an ageing population; between the 2001 and 2011 census the median age increased by 3 years, and the 0-14 and 25-44 age groups fell
- Average household size is 2.3⁵ people and in line with national trends household sizes have fallen over recent years.
- The district saw an increase of 15.1% in dwellings between 2001 and 2011⁶.

¹ Mid 2015 estimate, ONS 2016

² 2016 Valuation Office Agency data

³ Central Lincolnshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015

⁴ Census 2011

⁵ Central Lincolnshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015

⁶ Census 2011

HOUSING STRATEGY VISION

Our vision for housing in West Lindsey is for a district where “Everyone has access to good quality housing which meets their housing need and aspiration, in a pleasing environment which enables a healthy lifestyle.”

This means that we want to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to access good quality housing upon and within which they can build happy, successful and prosperous lives. Our challenge however is principally one of how we can meet the differing requirements of all 129 communities within the district where their needs, strengths, assets and opportunities vary so much and to do so within the context of national and local policies and strategies.

To achieve this vision we will require housing partners and providers to work together across the district to deliver priorities within three key strategic themes:

- Driving housing growth to meet housing need
- Improving homes and transforming places
- A partnership approach to support choice, wellbeing and independence

These themes are the building blocks and form the section headings of this strategy; they will underpin not only all of the Council’s work on housing, but also the level of contribution we seek and need to secure from our partners to deliver our vision for the benefit of our communities.

OUR AMBITION

Primarily led by the development of new housing, West Lindsey is committed to housing growth and economic development. However we must ensure that the level and type of growth we are seeking is supported by appropriate infrastructure and meets the needs of our residents and businesses alike. We must also ensure that the benefits associated with growth and increased investment are accessed and enjoyed by all of our residents.

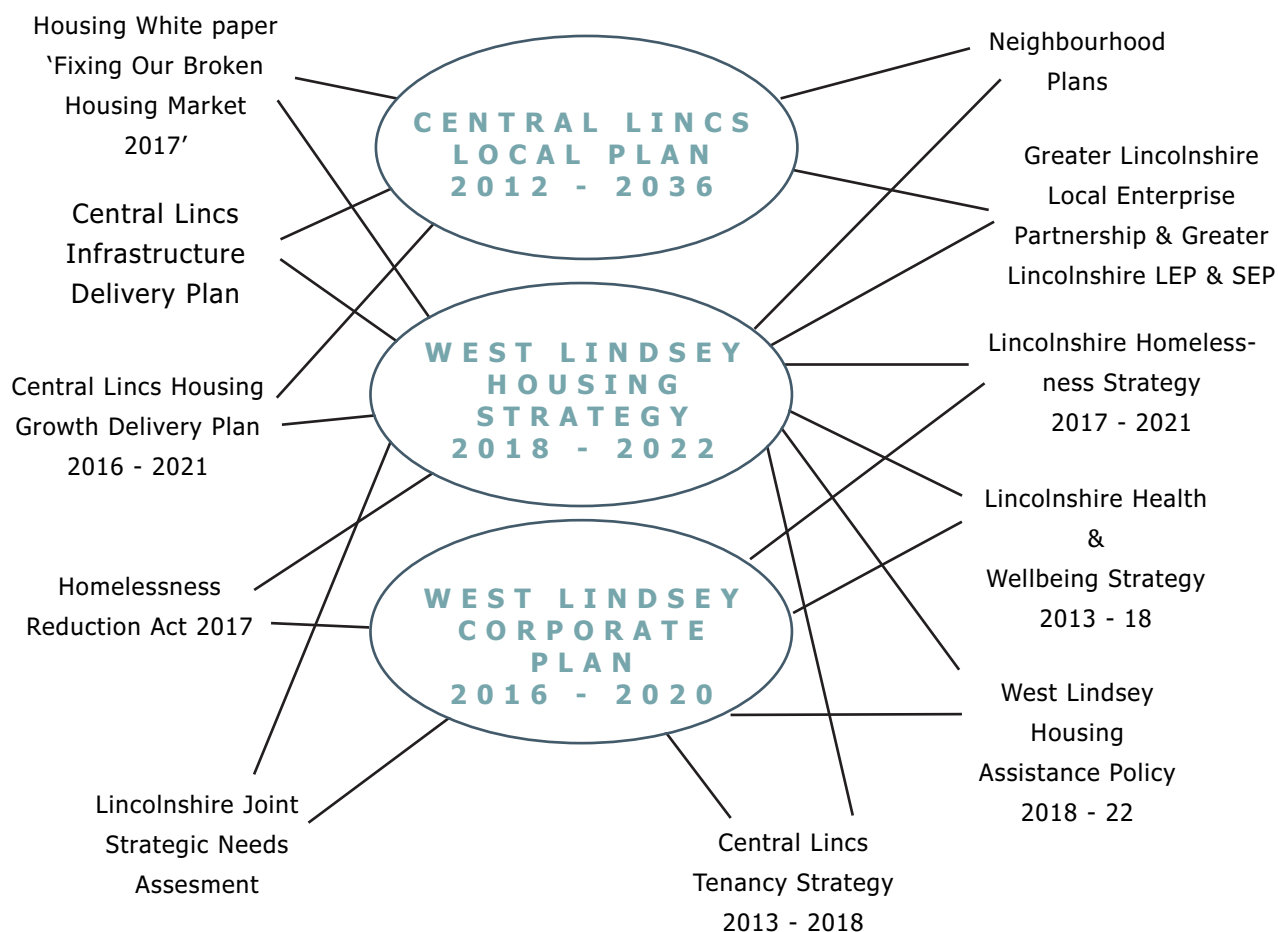
Our desire through growth is therefore to create safer, stronger, more resilient and prosperous communities.

To achieve this ambition our Housing Strategy is embedded and aligns itself with a number of key locally adopted strategies and plans, most importantly the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan 2012-2036 and West Lindsey District Council’s own Corporate Plan 2016-2020.

We recognise that the successful delivery of our ambition through our strategic themes will require partnership working across a number of areas within the council and through collaboration with a number of key partner organisations. It will involve not only delivering new housing that meets the housing needs of our residents but raising standards and making best use of existing housing stock and by doing so reduce health inequalities, promote healthy lifestyles and maximise health and wellbeing within the district.

It is important that we consider both challenges and opportunities moving forward in an ever changing local and national picture. These challenges and opportunities are varied and include the following:

- Need for additional new homes across all tenures.
- The impact and implications of new legislation and regulation across planning, homelessness and the private sector.
- Innovative affordable housing solutions to meet housing need.
- Viability of development sites in some areas of the district.
- Government emphasis on pace of build.
- Increased demand on homelessness services.
- Renewed emphasis on homelessness prevention.
- Increased demand in the private rented sector to meet housing need.
- Identifying new and innovative methods to finance housing development.
- Removal of housing benefit support for 18 – 21 year olds.
- Changes to the future funding of supported and sheltered housing.
- A drive to integrate housing, health and social care.
- Disproportionate challenges in areas of the district requiring a strategic ‘place based’ approach.



NATIONAL & LOCAL CONTEXT

Much of the way in which housing services are delivered is governed by legislation and national and local policies of which there are a number providing context to this Housing Strategy and the impact they have on our district including:



Housing White Paper (2017) 'Fixing our Broken Housing Market'

The White Paper identifies the following three main challenges facing the national housing market:

- an insufficient land supply for the required amount of housing development;
- the slow pace of development from permission to completion; and
- the need to diversify the housing market.

Once legislated, the White Paper will provide a significant part of the policy background to deliver this Strategy. We recognise the need to build more homes

at an increased pace and how these aspirations link to economic growth. By putting 'people first' at the centre of our strategy, our plans over the next 5 years will do just that resulting in all sectors of the community benefiting including those trying to get onto the housing ladder, those looking for a better quality property in the private rented sector and vulnerable households seeking accommodation to meet their needs.

Housing & Planning Act (2016)

The 2016 Housing and Planning Act is a major piece of legislation for the housing sector and introduces a number of changes including:

- The introduction of Right to Buy for Housing Association tenants which has the potential to significantly impact on our statutory duties in relation to homeless households.
- End of lifetime tenancies
- Giving local authorities greater powers to tackle criminal landlords including the provision of the use of fixed penalty notices for Housing Act offences. Income from this to be reinvested into local authority housing services. Also the creation of a criminal landlord database to enable the worst offenders to be easily identified across different geographical areas.

• The expansion of the self build and custom build sector – opening up a new way of entering the housing market

- measures to increase the supply of new starter homes which would likely mean less affordable homes for rent being built. The Housing White Paper however gives further clarity on delivery and the ambition of the Government to build 200,000 starter homes by the end of the next Parliament⁷. Even with the subtle change to 'help over 200,000 people become homeowners by the end of Parliament' the target is now defunct due to the General Election which was held on 8th June 2017.

National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the planning policies for England and how they are applied. It forms a significant part of the policy background for the delivery of this strategy. The NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to assess and plan to meet their own objectively assessed housing requirements. The Housing

White Paper (2017) proposed a number of potential amendments to the NPPF. Consultation has taken place on amendments and revisions to the NPPF and Central Government have indicated that some changes could be implemented in late summer 2018.

Localism Act 2011

The aim of the Act was to devolve power from central government to individuals, communities and local councils. Key measures set out in the Act include new freedoms for local government, new rights and powers for communities

and individuals, reform to the planning system and reforms about local decisions made in relation to housing

Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017

As with the Localism Act, the Neighbourhood Planning Act gives rights and powers to communities allowing them to shape development within their settlement or parish through the production of a neighbourhood plan. The CLLP

provides the strategic planning guidance while neighbourhood plans set out policies and plans for settlements on a very local scale aiming to deliver locally specific community priorities.

Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) (2017)

The Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) amends Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. It was enacted in April 2018 and has become a major piece of homelessness legislation. It will introduce a number of new legal duties with resulting implications. Placing a renewed emphasis on homelessness prevention, the HRA introduces duties to assess the needs of and seek to prevent homelessness for all eligible households within 56 days of them becoming homeless, irrespective of priority need or intentional homelessness.



Key changes and implications of the HRA include:

- Extension to the period of time within which a household is classed as 'threatened with homelessness' from 28 days to 56 days.
- Initial duty owed to all eligible persons who are homeless
- Duty to provide advisory services.
- Duty to assess every eligible applicants case and agree a clear plan of the steps required to prevent or relieve homelessness.

Introduction of a 'prevention duty' for all eligible applicants.

- Introduction of a 'relief duty' to take reasonable steps to secure accommodation for eligible homeless applicants regardless of priority need.

'Duty to Refer' – The Act also places a duty on other local services to notify the local housing authority if they are working with an applicant who is homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Welfare Reform & Work Act (2016)

There is a strong Government focus on reform to the Welfare Benefit system. One of the key policy focus' being to encourage and support households to take up employment opportunities as opposed to being reliant upon welfare payments to meet housing and living costs.

The introduction of Universal Credit (which consolidates a range of existing welfare payments into a single monthly payment) and the introduction of caps and limits of the benefit that households are entitled to in order to cover their living and housing costs presents enormous challenges as many households across the district, particularly those already facing financial exclusion, have experienced a reduction in their income placing significant pressure on their ability to sustain their tenancies.



Key impacts include:

- Lowering of the benefit cap from £26,000 per year to £20,000 which will impact on a larger number of households particularly in higher value areas where housing benefit is being claimed to support accommodation costs.
- Housing benefit restrictions for those aged under 35 which creates challenges for meeting the housing needs of those in this age group, particularly in relation to those whose needs are best met in self-contained as opposed to shared accommodation.
- Housing benefit removal for 18-21 year olds which was intended to encourage young people into work, or to remain at home, but in reality is limiting the housing options available for younger people.
- Introduction of a 4 year reduction in social housing rents by 1%.

Sitting below the national strategies and policies are a range of regional and local plans. These include:

Greater Lincolnshire Local Economic Partnership and the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) (2014 - 2034)

The Greater Lincolnshire Local Economic Partnership (GLLEP) is a partnership working with the Government to find solutions to enable the delivery of strategic projects that will drive local prosperity and economic growth. The Strategic Economic Plan 2014-2034 (SEP) is the primary

document which underpins everything the GLLEP aims to do. It sets out ambitious targets of creating 13,000 new jobs by 2030, and assisting in the creation of 100,000 new homes and helping 22,000 existing businesses grow across Lincolnshire.

Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (CLLP) (2012 - 2036)

The Central Lincolnshire Local Plan – adopted April 2017 establishes a total housing target of 36,960 new homes up to 2036 with the focus for future housing growth falling within the main settlements of the City of Lincoln, Sleaford and Gainsborough and in settlements that support their roles. This approach makes the most of existing services and facilities, delivering growth where it is most needed, providing opportunities to regenerate urban areas and provide new jobs and homes in accessible locations.

For West Lindsey, the Local Plan sets out a delivery target of 4,435 new homes within the Gainsborough area which includes two new Sustainable Urban Extensions.

Outside of the main urban areas the smaller towns and villages in Central Lincolnshire and certainly in West Lindsey vary in size, demography, accessibility, facilities, is-

suess and opportunities. The CLLP determines how each community can contribute to the delivery of a sustainable Central Lincolnshire. To maintain and enhance their roles as market towns Caistor and Market Rasen will be the focus for significant but proportionate growth. The plan also allows for larger villages such as Welton, Scotter and Nettleham which provide housing, employment and key services for the local area to maintain and enhance their role. Levels of growth for medium and smaller villages within the district are also set out within the plan.

Policies are also included to ensure that the infrastructure that is required to support the delivery of new homes is provided at the same time.

Central Lincolnshire Housing Growth Strategy 2016 - 2021

The Central Lincolnshire Housing Growth Strategy sets out the housing issues and challenges facing Central Lincolnshire, identifying the following six strategic objectives:

- Deliver sustainable housing growth.
- Deliver affordable housing.
- Deliver housing to meet diversity of need including Older Persons.
- Maintain and improve the housing stock and bring empty properties back into use.
- Deliver quality and energy efficiency in the new housing stock.
- Deliver and maintain a robust and up to date evidence base.



It focusses on increasing housing supply recognising that the development industry alone will not provide the full range of homes needed and sets out how the partner authorities will work together to deliver more homes.

Central Lincs Infrastructure Delivery Plan (CLIPD)

Sitting alongside the CLLP the Central Lincs Infrastructure Delivery Plan identifies where and how appropriate physical and social infrastructure such as schools, roads, health

facilities and open space will be needed and delivered; all of which contributes to the overall quality of life for our residents.

West Lindsey Corporate Plan (2016 - 2020)

The West Lindsey Corporate Plan sets out the council's priorities and objectives designed to meet the many and varied needs of our district. To achieve the objectives within the Corporate Plan, 6 key themes are identified:

- Open for Business.
- People First.
- Asset Management.
- Delivering the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan.
- Partnerships.
- Excellent, value for money service.



Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2018 - 2021

Local authorities have long recognised that partnership working is the key to tackling homelessness. Lincolnshire Housing Authorities have, for a number of years, had a collaborative strategic approach to preventing and tackling

the issue across Lincolnshire. As a result of this successful collaboration, a further countywide homelessness strategy is currently in development.

Lincolnshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy

Informed by the Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), the Lincolnshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy underpins the activity for the Health and Wellbeing Board. Housing is identified as a key priority for Lincolnshire in the current strategy (2013 – 2018) however activity to genuinely integrate housing has only recently

started to gain momentum. The national drive to align and better integrate housing, health and care is reflected within the most recent Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for Lincolnshire and is likely to be a focus of the new strategy, which is currently in development.

The Care Act (2014)

The Care Act (2014) makes a requirement for closer co-operation between health, care and services that address the wider determinants of health, including housing; to

deliver outcome based support, systems and provision to meet identified needs.

HOUSING IN WEST LINDSEY

The current housing offer in West Lindsey is very diverse across the District reflecting the urban and rural locations and the dispersed nature of the district. The wider urban area of Gainsborough is characterised by smaller properties focused around terraced, semi-detached and flatted property, whereas in more rural areas the housing stock more usually comprises of larger owner occupied detached properties.

House prices vary greatly across the district with some smaller terraced properties in Gainsborough priced below £75,000 where in contrast prices in more rural areas can attract values in excess of £300,000.

KEY HOUSING FACTS IN WEST LINDSEY

- West Lindsey is a non stock holding authority.
- Objectively assessed need within the Central Lincs Local Plan 2012 -2036 for 1540 dwellings per annum across Central Lincolnshire (SHMA 2015).
- Need for 231 affordable homes (2015 - 2019) then 181 affordable dwellings until 2036 in West Lindsey (SHMA 2015).
- Affordable housing need driven by newly arising future need.
- 11% of housing stock social rent. Below the national average with the exception of Gainsborough East.
- 13.7% of housing stock in the district is private rent. Diversely spread with less choice in rural areas. Sector grew by 7.1% between 2001 and 2011⁸.
- 50% of stock is privately rented in South West Ward of Gainsborough is privately rented.
- In 2014 approximately 33%⁹ of all private rented properties in West Lindsey were estimated to contain at least one Category 1 Hazard under the Housing and Health Rating System.
- Approximately one third of private rented properties in the district have EPC rating below band E.
- Selective licensing scheme introduced in the South West Ward Gainsborough is helping to tackle anti-social behaviour, poor housing standards and poor standards of housing management practices by private landlords.
- Decommissioning of MoD sites without a clear exit strategy has led to the emergence of vulnerable, unstable and unsustainable communities.
- The West Lindsey overall ranking for deprivation is 152 out of England's 326 local authorities.
- Increase in demand for housing advice, homelessness and homelessness prevention services year on year since 2013/14 with a significant increase in 2016/17.
- Loss of Private Rented Sector (PRS) tenancy is the leading cause of homelessness in West Lindsey.
- Assistance to remain in PRS tenancy through proactive homelessness prevention intervention is a key prevention tool.
- Central Lincs has seen considerable growth in older persons between 2001 and 2011. In West Lindsey, the over 65 age group has seen a 28.5% increase. Further growth is expected in this age group before the life of the CLLP.¹⁰

⁸ Central Lincs Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015/Census 2011

⁹ Lincolnshire Stock Condition Survey 2014

¹⁰ CLSHMA

POSITIONING OURSELVES TO MEET THE NEED AND ASPIRATIONS OF OUR COMMUNITIES

To address the future housing challenges and aspirations of the district, our Strategy sets out three key strategic themes, identified through evidence gathering, to deliver our ambition. Crucially, the council cannot and will not aim to do everything itself and we are clear that leadership and service delivery on housing in West Lindsey extends beyond the council. Our approach is that the Strategy should apply to all homes in the district, which means everyone involved in building, managing and supporting the people who live in West Lindsey's homes has a role to play.

We recognise that this document does not contain all of the detail, challenges, issues or possible solutions for housing in West Lindsey. In part, this is because we do not have or have not yet developed all of the answers. More detail is available within the accompanying Housing Strategy Implementation Plan where, within each theme, we have identified a number of key areas of priority actions which need to be addressed in order to meet the objectives, detailing the measures and resources required.

The Implementation Plan is a working document which forms the basis of a programme of work being delivered by the council to address issues and meet challenges and aspirations for housing and housing related services within the district.

In order to ensure this Strategy is effectively implemented and meets its objectives progress against the key actions will be monitored quarterly and reviewed annually. An annual review enables us to ensure that we have the

flexibility to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing housing environment and to ensure we can be responsive to both local issues and changes to the national legislative and policy environment that will occur over the lifetime of the Strategy.

This Strategy is therefore a public document which we want to be accessible to everyone. There are some groups of people that we expect will be particularly interested in some or all of the document.

These include:

- Existing residents
- People looking to move into West Lindsey so they can understand what their options are and what support they might expect
- Private developers and registered providers (housing associations) proposing to build new homes
- Private landlords and registered providers who let homes in West Lindsey, so they know what standards are expected and how those standards might be enforced
- Regional and central government agencies such as Homes England formerly the Home and Communities Agency (HCA) and the Ministry of Housing Communities and local Government (MHCLG), to help inform their funding decisions.
- Public bodies and voluntary sector organisations that provide services or advice to current or future residents, so they can make sure their own work with residents is consistent with the council's approach and is linked properly to the work being done by housing providers.
- The council itself, to ensure that our approach to housing and the future challenges are consistent with our overall strategic / corporate approach
- Providers of supported housing

Partnership working is therefore at the very heart of not only the delivery of the Strategy but also the development of future delivery solutions. Emphasis on partnership working is already a major focus for West Lindsey District Council. It is identified in our Corporate Plan and recognises the crucial role of partnership working further extended to include the creation of commercial partnerships and Joint Ventures.

KEY THEMES AND HOUSING PRIORITIES

THEME ONE DRIVING HOUSING GROWTH TO MEET HOUSING NEED

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

This theme seeks to increase the supply, mix and quality of new homes across all tenures. An increase in supply encourages greater choice to meet the housing needs of existing and future residents within the district and at the same time delivers the additional benefits of infrastructure to improve not only the built environment but the social role in improving the lives and wellbeing of our residents.

Housing growth targets for the district are set within the Central Lincs Local Plan which was adopted in April 2017. Whilst 12% of the growth for the whole of Central Lincolnshire is planned for Gainsborough larger villages situated in the Lincoln fringe area and the other market towns within the district will also accommodate a number of new homes over the plan period.

Market Rasen, defined as a market town within the CLLP, will be the focus for significant but proportionate growth. Residential development land is allocated which can accommodate 640 dwellings. Planning consent in excess of 500 new homes has already been granted or is in the planning system awaiting determination. As a result the role of the town is already changing, as are the pressures that it is experiencing, physically, economically and socially. It is acknowledged that successfully attracting this investment will make a material difference however whilst this presents a number of opportunities it also

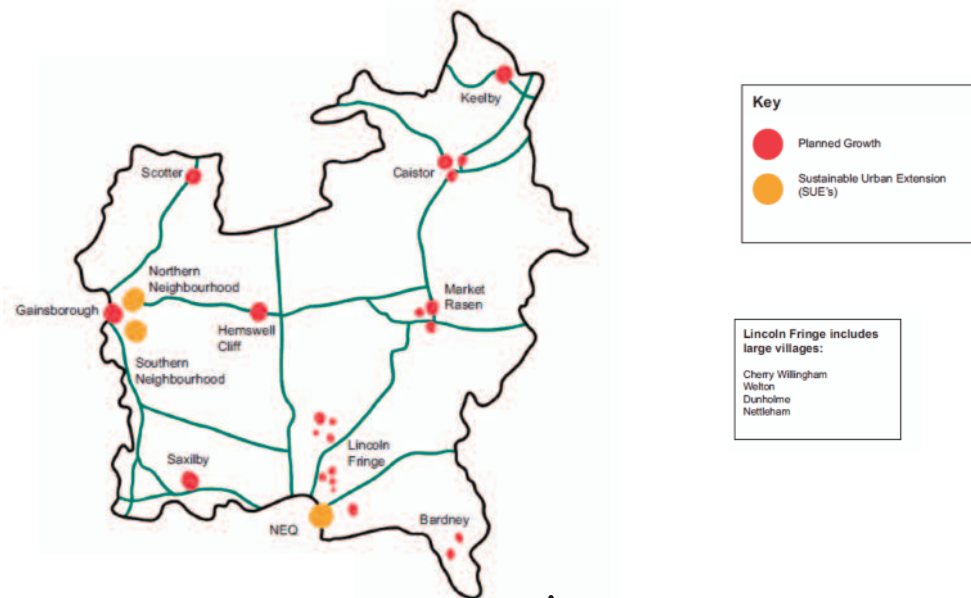
raises concerns in relation to the impact this will have on infra-structure and capacity, along with a declining retail offer within the town centre. It is within this context that the emerging Market Rasen 3 Year Vision and Strategy is of such importance highlighting how the distinctive strengths of the town should be safeguarded and be central to the future of the town as well as outlining opportunities for development. These will address some of the existing weaknesses and contribute to the comprehensive improvement of Market Rasen as a place to live, work and invest.

The local housing market in West Lindsey has seen improvements in recent years and whereas the rate of housebuilding has also improved the level across the district is lower than required. In order to meet our ambition for growth, we need to take positive and proactive steps as an enabling authority to ensure that residential development proposals are both viable and deliverable in all parts of the district.

During the plan period 2012-2036 Gainsborough will seek to accommodate a target of 4435 new homes. At the forefront of our housing plans for the town is the Greater Gainsborough Housing Zone which will act as a catalyst to the creation of a new and differentiated housing market in the town. Bespoke procurement of a development partner to act as master developer and delivery body of the Gainsborough Growth Programme is underway, focussing on this aspect. Access to recoverable investment funding and Government support through the Homes England is available to the



DISTRIBUTION OF GROWTH WITHIN WEST LINDSEY



authority to expedite the delivery of housing on brownfield land by removing the barriers, such as the cost of addressing flood risk in areas where values may be low, that are preventing delivery.

The Housing Zone designation has also given access to Homes England grant funding to increase the capacity, skills and expertise within the council's dedicated delivery team to further drive housing growth.

The Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (GLLEP) is a business led partnership made up of private and public sector leaders working with the Government to find solutions to enable the delivery of projects which will drive local prosperity and economic growth. Its commitment to the facilitation of housing growth is demonstrated at a countywide level with Local Plans leading on the delivery target of 100,000 new homes by 2031.

West Lindsey's successful bid to the GLLEP's Single Local Growth Fund aligned to the implementation of our ambitious regeneration plans for Gainsborough resulted in an award of £4m, which will further kick start housing development. The delivery of the Housing Zone sites therefore will not only provide a minimum of 750 new homes but will regenerate the town centre and riverfront areas of the town contributing to a new sense of place and wealth. In turn this will help unlock and service a further 3,500 new homes, including development on the town's two Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUE's), and help create more than 3,000 new jobs.

Whilst investment in the town on this scale is welcomed

and will certainly have a positive impact on delivery the challenges associated with delivering this level of growth in the town are considerable. The Housing Zone designation has enabled us to raise the profile of the town but the viability of sites remains a key issue due to the riverside location of a number of sites resulting in higher build costs and lower values within some areas of the town.

This diversity of the district in relation to house type, tenure and location and the impact of this on values that can be achieved is recognised in the Whole Plan Viability Study undertaken as part of the evidence base for the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan and CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) examination¹¹.

Due to the significant variance in values, and the aforementioned high levels of growth planned for Gainsborough, additional detailed testing in the town was undertaken.

The testing concluded that in order to achieve delivery within the Greater Gainsborough Housing Zone investment in the wider provision of infrastructure and pump prime funding would be required. The Council's Capital Investment Programme, designed to unlock the housing zone sites, is such that it would exceed any potential loss of CIL revenue available from the developments and as a consequence a zero charging zone was established in an area bounded by the railway line in Gainsborough West¹².

This pragmatic approach to CIL not only recognises the diversity of the district through the use of charging zones, based on market evidence, but further demonstrates our commitment to promoting development and driving growth whilst at the same time ensuring that where achievable,

¹¹ Peter Brett Associates Whole Plan Viability Study 2015

¹² Peter Brett Associates Whole Plan Viability Study 2015 p50

contributions to affordable housing and strategic infrastructure are made.

We want the balance of housing in the district to ensure that there are enough homes of the right types, sizes and quality for people at all stages in their lives to aspire to.

Critical to West Lindsey's future economic success will be ensuring there are a number of larger homes in attractive environments, providing more choice, to attract economically active households as well as providing appropriate housing for our ageing population which will free up existing properties.

Further evidence of the diversity of the district is demonstrated by the fact there are areas where house prices are lower than average and it is assumed that because of this that these houses are 'affordable'. However in reality these houses may not be of the type or quality expected to meet modern expectations or in locations currently viewed as desirable. These houses therefore cannot be seen as the solution to the evidenced need for affordable housing across the district. They do however have the potential to provide other innovative opportunities to the Council and our partners.

The challenges facing the authority and our Central Lincolnshire partners to deliver the number of affordable homes in Central Lincolnshire to meet the full needs set out in the Central Lincs Strategic Housing Market Assessment (Turleys, 2016) are considerable.

The Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (adopted April 2017) policy has needed to have regard to what can viably and reasonably be achieved when taking the other policy 'asks' and developer contributions needed to deliver other forms of essential infrastructure, such as education provision and healthcare into consideration. As such, the affordable housing requirements set out in the plan are presented as targets and in most cases, due to the clear viability constraints set out in the Whole Plan Viability Report (Peter Brett, 2016), would only deliver around half of the actual need presented in the SHMA.

With the introduction of the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in January 2018, which is fixed, affordable housing will remain subject to negotiation. The evidence, however, robustly demonstrates that affordable housing targets can viably be met whilst also meeting the requirements of the CIL.

It is likely therefore that particularly in areas of the district where values are lower or there is known to be



a tighter viability gap, that affordable housing targets will face scrutiny and pressure.

This inability to meet affordable housing need through the planning process alone is not exclusive to West Lindsey, nor indeed to the Central Lincolnshire sub-region, and is in fact reflective of a country-wide issue that is well evidenced and is a common concern for nearly all local authorities.

The challenge for West Lindsey will be to deliver additional affordable housing to help mitigate the known undersupply that the planning system can deliver. This issue will be a concern in all parts of the district. An undersupply of additional affordable homes to meet housing need will not only occur in areas where there is less delivery across all tenures but will also occur in areas where the housing market is more buoyant, such as the villages on the Lincoln fringe. The evidenced need for affordable homes will only be met where additional intervention takes place using alternative and innovative approaches.

A national focus on home ownership will undoubtedly generate opportunities to support households into home ownership across the district, however, it is likely to result in fewer homes being developed for affordable and social rent. This creates further challenges for the council in relation to how we plan to meet the needs of those for whom home ownership is not a viable housing solution. A further challenge is for us to understand how many households will be able to afford low cost home ownership products.

As an enabling authority we aim to continue to work in a flexible manner so that supply can adapt as the housing market and demand for homes changes ensuring that the places where we want development to happen are both viable and attractive.

THEME TWO

IMPROVING HOMES AND TRANSFORMING PLACES

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Improving the existing housing stock and the resulting benefits to residents and communities is a key priority for the council. Whilst we do not own or manage any housing stock we wish to work with others to achieve a number of outcomes including raising housing standards, addressing energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty. Reducing the number of empty homes in the district will also be addressed under this theme.

As it has grown in size, the private rented sector in West Lindsey has become increasingly more important. A healthy high quality private rented sector helps to support economic and social mobility, and can provide an affordable housing option for those households on lower incomes. As well as encouraging the development of more homes for owner occupation, we are keen to support and encourage the continued growth of the private rented sector where the accommodation (and management services) meets the required standards.

The quality of housing within this sector has however not always kept pace with the demands of the market and so, in places, it detracts from our vision for a thriving and prosperous district. Nowhere is this more evident than in parts of Gainsborough and in the former MoD estates. To address this we want to raise standards and competition within the sector by



increasing the quantity of new good quality homes for rent. We want private landlords to raise their game and in doing so provide homes and the residential environments that meet aspirations. Where private landlords either cannot or choose not to respond to these challenges, we will provide advice, assistance and where necessary utilise our statutory powers to ensure standards are improved.

We recognise that the majority of landlords provide a good standard of accommodation and service to their tenants and we aim to build a more trusting relationship with landlords alongside our formal enforcement approach. The council will therefore continue to support these landlords through a range of assistance and advice based services. Our advice will be focussed on ensuring that landlords understand their legal obligations and are signposted to the appropriate resources and advice to enable them to manage their properties effectively and to a high standard.

The Council, in partnership with other agencies will actively seek out criminal landlords and will utilise its statutory powers to deal with them. The Council has already introduced a selective licensing scheme in the South West Ward of Gainsborough to address issues such as anti-social behaviour and low housing demand. This approach is in line with the Government's increased regulation for the sector and is an approach that may be required across other parts of the district. The move towards increased regulation in the sector is seen as a positive step and the approach to dealing with poor housing standards is in line with this.

We also recognise the impact that empty properties can have upon all neighbours and wider neighbourhoods. As well as a wasted resource and potential blight within a community, empty properties can present a health risk, can become a focus for unwanted or anti-social activity and can adversely impact upon the image and values within a neighbourhood.

We have a strong track record of identifying and working with owners to help them bring these properties back into use. Where owners are either unable or unwilling to take the necessary steps to re-use their properties, again we are able to utilise and deploy a range of powers to aid this process.

THEME THREE

A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH TO SUPPORT CHOICE, WELLBEING AND INDEPENDENCE

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Housing is about more than the built environment – it is about people and communities. We will only be successful in our ambition if the provision of housing and housing related services helps to meet the wider needs and aspirations of all of our residents and communities as recognised by the 'People First' and 'Partnership' themes of our Corporate Plan.

We want our neighbourhoods and communities to be mixed and inclusive. To achieve this we need to ensure greater equality, resilience and stability through improvements in the amount, mix and quality of our homes. Therefore whilst much of the early focus of this strategy prioritises the delivery of new homes and physical improvements to existing properties, we need to balance this against the need to ensure that housing in West Lindsey provides a foundation upon which people can build happy and successful lives, promoting stability, independence, health and wellbeing.

This means that we and our partners become more than landlords and service providers and take a more proactive approach to helping residents find and keep a home and by working together with them to improve their health, education, skills and employment prospects and maintain their independence.

At its most extreme the very real issues of rising homelessness and decreasing access to housing mean that there needs to be a focus on early intervention, prevention and enabling access to housing. Whilst we already place emphasis on homelessness prevention, the new duties associated with the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) will enhance our responsibilities to prevent homelessness for a much broader cohort of customers. The HRA is likely to significantly increase the prevention outcomes we achieve whilst reducing the number of applicants that require a full homeless duty. The duties and changes to the assessment journey for customers will require some adjustment to roles and processes for receiving and managing caseloads. The work required at the initial assessment and advice stage of the revised process will be substantial. There will also



be a need to enhance capacity in terms of monitoring and reporting on our homelessness prevention performance. We will continue to shift resources to tackle the causes of problems rather than just treating the symptoms. This focus upon intervention aims to reduce the number of specialist interventions and prevent crisis. In order to achieve this, we will focus on working in partnership to bring resources together in order to maximise the impact of any interventions. Additionally, we must consider a number of challenges that are likely to impact heavily upon those who are marginalised and vulnerable to experiencing homelessness. These challenges include changes to Government policy where careful management of the possible impacts are required, a continuous demand on resources in the face of tightening budgetary pressures, a fragile national economic picture and various policy areas that have the potential to impact on preventing and tackling homelessness but are not necessarily co-ordinated. Alongside our ambitions for growth we must place emphasis on preventing homelessness and developing a range of housing and support options to assist us to do so. Placing our homelessness prevention, growth and social regeneration efforts in the context of the council's Growth agenda through this Housing Strategy allows us to approach this in a more holistic way. We are committed to working with a range of partners to meet the needs of those who are vulnerable to or experiencing homelessness in our district.

Homelessness is a complex issue that cuts across many policy areas. Over the past four years Lincolnshire has experienced an increase in homelessness, alongside an increase in the complexity of the needs of individuals and

households affected by homelessness. Now more than ever we need to work together to respond to an environment of rapid change.

The potential impact of a wide range of policy changes on people who are vulnerable to experiencing homelessness cannot be underestimated. Of particular concern is the affordability of housing for younger people – we will need to explore, in partnership, options to enable access to good quality, affordable accommodation for all. During 2016/17 73% of the demand on our home choices service was from people aged between 26 and 55. We will maximise opportunities brought about by the Homelessness Reduction Act for early identification and notification of homelessness risk by our public sector partners, to allow for earlier intervention and collaboration. We will extend this approach to ensure that customers and stakeholders are able to access our homelessness prevention services at the earliest opportunity and are aware of how to do so. We will also continue to review our evidence base and work with partners to respond to emerging risks and accommodation needs, for example, by exploring alternative housing models and options for specific cohorts and age groups actively building on our existing approach.

Local Authorities are reliant on social housing stock to meet housing need and prevent homelessness. A decrease in the supply of new social housing has the potential to significantly impact on our ability to meet our statutory duties in relation to homelessness households. A reduction in supply may also limit our ability to utilise

social housing to prevent and/or alleviate homelessness before it arises, and also to limit the options available for those in need of independent accommodation (such as those presently residing in supported accommodation). We must seek to ensure that the available supply of affordable rented housing is prioritised for those in greatest need, and that those who can meet their housing needs through alternative tenures, including a good quality affordable home in the private rented sector are supported to do so.

The loss of private rented accommodation continues to be a leading cause of homelessness in West Lindsey. Similarly, our homelessness prevention activity majors on supporting people to remain in the private rented sector. Ensuring that the private rented offer in West Lindsey is suitable, affordable and well managed and that by seeking to intervene earlier we can prevent the loss of accommodation where possible.

In common with many areas, the population in West Lindsey is also set to witness a significant level of growth amongst older person households. As well as living for longer, many older person households prefer to continue to live in their own homes before seeking specialist accommodation. Support should therefore maintain a focus upon developing the range of services which will help many older people maintain and stay within their own homes.

We do however also recognise that housing choices for older people is often limited, so in partnership with providers of housing and support services we need to



consider the appropriateness of more specialist accommodation with support, including retirement housing and extra care models alongside reviewing existing sheltered housing which may no longer be fit for purpose to respond to long term demographic changes and support the future needs of specific groups.

Housing also plays a key role in supporting wellbeing. As a district council, we are well placed to have a leading contributory role in the strategic infrastructure surrounding housing, health and care as key policy areas and their associated interdependencies. Our commitment to improving health and wellbeing outcomes for communities is rooted in our Corporate Plan and the council has invested in resources to fully understand and maximise the role we can play. Whilst we are increasingly and more actively involved, this agenda is moving rapidly and we need to position



ourselves to have a collaborative role at both a strategic and local level for the benefit of residents in West Lindsey. Through this Housing Strategy we aim to explore the opportunities which will enable us to maximise the role we can play.

Housing is identified as a key priority for Lincolnshire in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013 – 2018. The Lincolnshire Health and Wellbeing Board is one of only 12 (out of 150 across the country) to have identified it as such. Given the necessary focus on and the rapidly moving transition to align housing, health and care to improve wellbeing outcomes, it is likely that housing will continue to be a priority for the board. At both officer and political level, we are actively engaged in the Health and Wellbeing Agenda for Lincolnshire. The recent inception of the Housing, Health and Care Delivery Group (a formal sub group of and accountable to the Lincolnshire Health & Wellbeing Board) is considered an important tool to work in partnership with colleagues across Housing, Health and Care and to ensure that programmes of work are aligned. This group will allow for greater integration of services and improved outcomes for residents across Lincolnshire. District councils are actively helping to shape and drive the work programme for the group. The importance of understanding and maximising opportunities to improve health and wellbeing through this Housing Strategy must be realised. The Lincolnshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy is currently in its final stages of development and recognises the important role of housing in health.

OUR RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGES

The challenges identified within this Strategy are not exhaustive and will change within its lifetime. The Implementation Plan associated with this Strategy is a working document, which forms the basis of a programme of work being delivered by the council to address issues and meet challenges and aspirations for housing and housing related services as identified or as they arise through the coming years. The Strategy is a high level strategic document and does not set out in detail how delivery will be achieved. We

do not have all the answers and we are working in a rapidly changing policy environment and under significant monetary pressures. Therefore the actions and projects identified in the plan are not fixed and are likely to change over time. The outcomes, measures, resources and stakeholder/partner input required will be updated as each project is scoped out and implemented. This document will be monitored and updated regularly to reflect the impact of the programme of work and the positive effect on the lives of our residents.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Affordable Housing

Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing for households who cannot afford to meet their housing needs through the market.

Affordable Rent

Affordable rented housing is let by local authorities or private registered providers of social housing to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80 per cent of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).

Ministry of housing Communities and local Government (MHCLG)

The central Government department with responsibility for Local Government, housing and planning matters

Fuel Poverty

A household is considered to be in fuel poverty if they have required fuel costs that were above average and were they to spend that amount they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line

Homes England (Formerly Homes and Communities Agency)

The national housing and regeneration agency for England that provides investment for new affordable housing, improving existing social housing and regenerating land

Housing Association

Non-profit making organisations that provide low cost 'social housing' for people in need of a home. Any trading surplus is used to maintain existing homes and to help finance new housing

Intermediate Housing

Intermediate housing is homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels subject to the criteria in the Affordable Housing definition above.

Marginalised

Those with lack of access to resources, opportunities and rights

National Planning Policy framework (NPPF)

The Government's overarching planning policy document setting out planning priorities for England and outlines an expectation for how the associated policies should be applied.

Objectively Assessed need (OAN)

Establishes the quantum and mix of housing that households are willing and able to rent or buy either from their own resources or with assistance from the State

Owner Occupation

Properties owned outright by the occupier or being bought by the occupier with a mortgage

Priority Need

A priority for accommodation given to specified groups of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996

Private Rented Sector

All rented property other than that rented from housing associations and local authorities

Right to Buy

A scheme that helps social housing tenants in England to buy their home at a discount

Registered Provider (RP)

Provider of social housing registered with Homes England

Registered Social Landlord (RSL)

Housing Association

Sheltered Housing

Accommodation for sale or for rent exclusively to elderly or vulnerable people often with estate management services, emergency alarm system and warden service

Social rent

Rented housing owned and managed by local authorities and housing associations

Stakeholders

Individuals or groups or organisations with an interest or concern in something

Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)

A study into the local housing market that assesses housing need and demand to inform the development of the Local Plan and the Housing Strategy

Sustainable Housing

Homes that are designed to reduce the overall impact during and after construction in such a way that they can meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs.

Universal Credit

A new type of benefit designed to support people who are on a low income or out of work. It replaces six existing benefits and is currently being rolled out across the UK. The new system is based on a single monthly payment transferred directly into a bank account

Vulnerable

Those at risk for a reason which means they may be unable to take care of or protect themselves from harm or exploitation



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